

Finland

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Freedom of the Press

Finland continued to rank among the most free media environments in the world in 2013. Freedom of expression and access to information is guaranteed under Article 12 of the constitution. Although journalists and media outlets are generally allowed to operate freely, defamation is considered a crime, and the government actively pursues incidents of defamation of religion or ethnicity.

Finnish libel and defamation laws have been a concern, as the courts have traditionally treated libel cases as a dispute between the journalist and the subject, without taking into consideration the public's right to receive information on matters of public importance. This practice has repeatedly been contested by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), and the Finnish courts are beginning to adjust their rulings accordingly. In an October 2013 judgment, the ECHR found that television journalists Juha Arvo Mikael Ristamäki and Ari Jukka Korvola had been unfairly convicted of defamation for referring to a well-known Finnish businessman standing trial for economic offenses during a current-affairs program in 2006.

The self-regulatory Council for Mass Media (CMM) is responsible for upholding ethical standards across print, broadcast, and online media. The CMM is primarily made up of media representatives, but it also includes members of academia and the public. The council accepts and adjudicates complaints from the public, and the maximum sanction is a reprimand that must be published or broadcast immediately. Participation in the CMM is voluntary, but all major media outlets have signed on. State assistance accounts for up to 30 percent of the CMM's total funding; annual fees make up the remainder.

Physical harassment of or threats against journalists are extremely rare.

While circulation numbers are down due to the transition to digital media, Finland maintains a high newspaper readership. Media ownership is concentrated, with Alma Media and Sanoma controlling most newspaper distribution. Public broadcaster Yleisradio OY (YLE) and commercial channel MTV3 dominate television broadcasting. The radio sector includes four public-service channels and the commercial station Radio Nova, as well as a large number of semination and local stations. Public radio also broadcasts in the minority languages Swedish and Sámi (Lapp).

The internet is open and unrestricted, and around 92 percent of citizens had regular access in 2013. In 2010 it became a legal right for every Finn to have a 1Mbps broadband internet connection.

2014 Scores

Press Status

Free

Press Freedom Score

(0 = best, 100 = worst)

Legal Environment

(0 = best, 30 = worst)

4

Political Environment

(0 = best, 40 = worst)

3

Economic Environment

(0 = best, 30 = worst)

4